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Your Electric Cooperative's

ILLINOIS COUNTRY LIVING

February 2010



FIRED UP ON HEAT SOURCES ... WARMING UP TO EFFICIENCY

A crew member from Durbin Enterprises prepares to install loops for a geothermal heating and cooling system at Mike Henry's new home.

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www.icl.coop

800-593-2432 • aieinfo@aiec.coop

John Lowrey.....Editor
Jonie Larson.....Assistant Editor
Catrina McCulley Wagner..... Associate Editor
Ed VanHoose Contributing Editor
Lisa Rigoni Advertising Manager
Nancy R. Nixon Marketing Administrator
Sandy Wolske Advertising Coordinator/Graphic Designer
Jennifer Danzinger, Kathy Feraris
& Chris Reynolds..... Graphic Designers
Connie Newenham Circulation Coordinator

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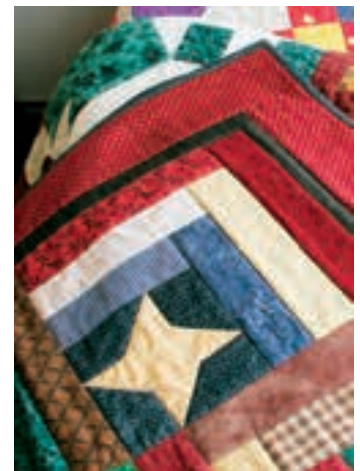
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A Call to Action

Co-ops urge members to stay in contact with Congress

If you've been a reader of this magazine for the last few years, or attended your co-op's annual meeting, you've heard repeatedly about climate change and the impact that proposed legislation and regulation will have on your energy bill. And we're not just talking about electricity. This could impact all your fossil fuel energy bills. The climate change legislative debate is the most challenging issue rural electric cooperatives have faced since our inception in the 1930s.

The issue is being debated in both the U.S. Congress and recently at a world conference in Copenhagen. So, climate change is front and center in the politics of our country and the world. It will have a huge impact on our economy and jobs. And it's personal. It will have a direct impact on your monthly bills.

This is a political year with very important mid-term elections where you have a chance to vote and score how our state and federal governments are doing.

It's a vote that matters and will affect a lot of issues – health care, our economy, national security and climate change.

Electric cooperative members like you have been engaged in this debate on climate change legislation. Your co-op asked you through a direct mail letter campaign earlier in 2009 to send post cards to our U.S. Senators expressing your

concerns about climate change legislation. You said they shouldn't pass legislation that isn't fair, affordable and achievable. In fact, co-op members in Illinois led the nation in sending post cards to senators.

If you have doubts about the impact of your post card, I can tell you we believe there was an immediate impact. Sen. Roland Burris listened to that strong local message. He was one of 14 Senate Democrats that signed on to Iowa's Sen. Harkin's letter to the Senate leadership asking that the fairness issue be addressed. Under the proposed legislation, Midwest consumers would pay a huge and disproportionate share of the cost for what is a national issue. That isn't fair.

Your voice made a difference. But this is not

a sprint. This is a marathon and you have to stay engaged.

You can stay engaged by following the issues closely as the debate moves along. The climate change debate may change directions. The focus could shift to renewable energy and energy efficiency mandates.

Electric cooperatives continue to be proactive in the areas of renewable energy, energy efficiency and smart grid technology without mandates. For example, the cover feature is on geothermal energy. Illinois co-ops have taken the lead in promoting and developing a market for this technology. Co-ops have given grants to schools, churches and other public groups for geothermal projects in Illinois.

So, if you have a chance to see and talk to candidates for office, ask them where they stand on these issues. What is their position? Do they understand the cost legislation and regulation may have on you as a rural electric co-op member and owner?

The easiest way to make your voice heard is to go to our Web site – www.ourenergy.coop. Through this Web site you can let your elected representatives know where you stand and that we need fair, affordable and achievable solutions to today's issues.

You can also be proactive by staying in touch with your local co-op. Annual meeting season begins this month and runs until September. Co-ops are democratically controlled, member-owned businesses. As an owner, it's imperative that you attend the business meeting, elect local directors that will represent you and understand the issues and challenges facing your co-op.

The key to democracy is for citizens like you to stay engaged and make your voice heard. ■

"The easiest way to make your voice heard is to go to our Web site – www.ourenergy.coop."

Duane Noland, President/CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives



WE NEED YOUR HELP.



Our Energy, Our Future™
A Dialogue With America

Senators are drafting climate change legislation NOW, and you can impact the outcome. Climate Change legislation should be:



Fair. Climate Change legislation needs to recognize regional differences in how electricity is produced.



Affordable. Any climate change plan must keep electricity affordable for all Americans.



Achievable. Climate Change legislation must be realistic to ensure long-term success.

▶ **Go to www.ourenergy.coop to make your voice heard.**

How to Prepare for a Disaster

As people throughout Illinois make resolutions for the New Year, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) is hoping many will resolve to become better prepared for emergencies during 2010. In January the agency launched a year-long preparedness effort called the "12-Month Preparedness Campaign."

The agency will feature per-

sonal and family preparedness tips and guidance on the Ready Illinois Web site (www.Ready.Illinois.gov). Directions on assembling a disaster supply kit and information about family emergency plans are two of the first subjects covered.

Other topics to be addressed during the year-long campaign include workplace preparedness, earthquake preparedness,

children and preparedness, weather-related preparedness, cyber security, preparedness for people with pets and livestock and preparedness for people with functional needs.

During large-scale emergencies, IEMA regularly posts current information about the situation on the www.Ready.Illinois.gov site. ■

Energy Home Improvement Creates Jobs, Saves Energy

Our country has the opportunity to rebuild our homes with three missions: rapidly create hundreds of thousands of sustainable, valuable jobs, stand up to a new competitive American industry and achieve our long-term climate and energy goals. And the opportunity is vast. Seventeen percent of our nation's experienced construction workers are unemployed and more than 20 percent of U.S. carbon emissions come from residential buildings.

With home retrofitting, we can put those unemployed workers back to work making millions of homes energy efficient, and allowing homeowners to save energy — and carbon and money — in the process. The Recovery act is deploying \$5 billion to 100 percent grants for low-income weatherization and \$1 billion for workforce training.

Retrofitting millions of American homes does not require new science or technology. It builds on existing technologies and labor skills.

Source: www.whitehouse.gov ■



Anaerobic Digesters to Help Cut Dairy Emissions by 25 Percent by 2020

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced on Dec. 15 an agreement with U.S. dairy producers to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020 while turning manure into electricity using anaerobic digesters. Under a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, the USDA, and dairy producers, the groups agreed to work together to reach the target.

Anaerobic digester technology is a proven method of converting waste products, such as manure, into electricity. The technology utilizes generators that are fueled by methane captured from the animal manure. Currently, only about 2 percent of U.S. dairies are using the technology. Dairy operations with anaerobic digesters routinely can generate enough electricity to power 200 homes. Beyond promoting the digesters, the agreement will encourage the research and development of new technologies to help dairies reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. ■

Wind Turbines — Not in My Back Yard

Are wind farms beautiful or ugly? It depends on whom you ask. Whether it's a wind farm, a coal-fired power plant, a nuclear reactor or even just a big box store, there are always going to be locals opposed to it, declaring "not in my back yard!" (NIMBY).

As to the attractiveness of wind farms, people do seem to come down on one side or the other rather vehemently. Those in favor of wind development have been known to extol the visual virtues of a horizon full of windmills not only for the turbines' graceful sculptural lines but also for the fact that their very presence advertises the coming of a modern, almost futuristic age of clean, renewable energy.

On the flip side, detractors begrudge wind turbines for destroying their views — a classic NIMBY stance.

For example, opponents of a proposed wind farm in the waters of Massachusetts' Nantucket Sound cite similar NIMBY concerns. The builder, Cape Wind Associates, has campaigned for seven years for approval of the development, to be located 16 miles off the shore of Nantucket Island. Homeowners, politicians and some evidently conflicted environmentalists have mounted stiff opposition to the facility, which would appear from shore



Photo by John Fox, Getty Images

as distant white smears on the horizon. The decision rests with the U.S. Interior Department, which, despite stated desires to expand offshore wind energy, is taking its time on the highly contentious matter.

Despite the NIMBY concerns, wind energy is now the hottest renewable energy source going. In 2008 wind power provided 1.5 percent of global electricity — having doubled its output every year now for five years in a row — and should account for as much as eight percent by 2018. ■

Record Cold Creates Heating Assistance Record Demand

This winter's bitter cold, even record breaking in some cases, has Low Income Home Energy Assistance program (LIHEAP) officials worried about insufficient funds. They warn current funding levels might be insufficient.

In the Midwest, there have been massive snowfalls and wind chills as low as 50 below zero. Some 8.3 mil-

lion households received assistance from LIHEAP, a jump of nearly 40 percent, and the second straight year that a new record was set.

Officials expect a 20 percent increase in the number of families seeking help, and they expect more money will be needed.

For fiscal 2010, Congress has kept

LIHEAP funding flat at \$5.1 billion. Unlike last year, the money is being released incrementally, rather than in a lump sum. But more families are falling behind on utility bills, with the average amount owed now at \$279. For LIHEAP information call toll free 877-411-WARM, or visit www.IllinoisLIHEAP.com. ■

Illinois Traffic Fatalities Drop Below 1,000 for First Time Since 1921

Believe it or not, 2009 was the safest year on Illinois roadways in 88 years as traffic fatality numbers dropped below 1,000. Illinois now joins a small, elite group of states that have experienced less than 1,000 highway fatalities in a calendar year. Maybe it's because safety belt usage exceeded 91 percent.

On Jan. 1, 2010, two new traffic laws took effect in Illinois which:

- Restrict drivers under the age of 19 from using a cell phone while driving. The law also prohibits the use of wireless telephones for all drivers, regardless of age, while operating a vehicle in a school zone or construction zone.
- Prohibit text messaging, composing, reading or sending electronic messages, or accessing Internet sites while driving a motor vehicle. ■



Picking the Perfect Faucet Saves Energy

It's important to repair or replace a leaking kitchen faucet even if the water coming out feels cold. The dripping water may actually be coming from the hot water side of the faucet valve. Look for a sprayer with an adjustable water-saving volume control. This tall spout kitchen faucet from Price Pfister has a long pullout sprayer for convenience and water savings. The most efficient models use 37 percent less water.

A one-handle design is more efficient. It allows you to set the mixture of hot and cold water for the desired temperature and then vary the flow rate. The faucet valve

design impacts its leak-free life. The best quality faucets today use discs to control the water flow rate and temperature. You may still find a few compression style valve faucets (with washers), but they leak over time and the washers must be replaced.

The following companies offer efficient kitchen faucets: American Standard, (800) 442-1902, www.americanstandard-us.com; Delta Faucet, (800) 345-3358, www.deltafaucet.com; Kohler, (800) 456-4537, www.kohler.com; Moen, (800) 289-6636, www.moen.com; and Price Pfister, (800) 732-8238, www.pricepfister.com.



Photo by Price Pfister

Have a question for Jim? Send inquiries to: James Dulley, Illinois Country Living, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit www.dulley.com. ■



Hunting Industry Expo in Bloomington

Today's hunters want to know how things tick, and they want the opportunity to get answers to their questions from experts. "We're offering exactly that opportunity on a wide range of valuable outdoor topics at our new Tech Information Center," says Glenn Helgeland of Target Communications, producer of the Illinois Deer & Turkey Classic. The 20th annual Illinois Deer & Turkey Classic will be Feb. 26-28, 2010, at the Interstate Center in Bloomington.

For details on the Deer and Turkey Classic, visit www.deerinfo.com. You will find exhibitor lists, seminar schedules, contest details (trophy big game, outdoor photo, trail cam photo, turkey calling), shooting range info, hotel lists, directions to each event, special events and activities and much more. ■

Donation of Unused Air Miles Supports Families of Wounded Service Members

Upon his return from visiting troops at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center and Fisher House in Germany, Governor Quinn encouraged the public to support Operation Hero Miles, a program that supports service members who were injured in Iraq or Afghanistan. Operation Hero Miles assists families allowing them to visit their loved ones who are recovering in military hospitals around the world through the donation of unused frequent flyer miles.

Administered by Fisher House, Operation Hero Miles is a not-for-profit foundation that provides a "home away from home" at little or no cost for family members of military personnel receiving medical care at military and Veterans Affairs medical centers around the world.

For additional information visit FisherHouse.org. To date, the program has issued more than 18,000 donated tickets, with a savings worth nearly \$25 million to military families. ■





ONE SMALL CHANGE X 176,000.

Imagine if everyone in our co-ops made one small change. Now, stop imagining. Flip a switch. Seal some cracks. Screw in a CFL. Install a programmable thermostat and actually program it. It doesn't take a lot of energy to save energy. But it sure pays off for all 176,000 of us. What can you do? Find out how the little changes add up at TogetherWeSave.com.

 Association of Illinois
Electric Cooperatives

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Fired Up on Heat Sources

Warming up to efficiency

By Jonie Larson

Let's face it. For most of us, besides changing the filter and paying the monthly bill, those furnaces sitting somewhere in the middle of our homes or heat pumps just outside, are fixtures we maneuver around but count on to do their jobs without much maintenance. In all honesty, we may not know how they actually work or whether they're efficient. For the most part, all we care is that they keep us warm.

But the time will come. The heating and cooling expert will one day deliver the news that the aging unit installed when the house was built – or the one inherited with the purchase of the home – is on its way out. Suddenly, you – the homeowner – must buy a new unit to heat your home. Your big question: Where do I begin?

With all this talk about energy efficiency and federal tax credits for improvements, even a knowledgeable consumer can be confused as to how much to spend and on what type of unit.

John Freitag, Vice President of Operations at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, says consumers need to balance their purchase against

plans for the future and the efficiency of their home.

There are all kinds of options, but geothermal is king because of its practical use of the earth's steady underground temperatures. A simple formula for how it works is described by Doug Rye, a well-known energy columnist often featured in *Illinois Country Living*.

Rye says geothermal is best described as a ground-source heat pump or water-source heat pump, meaning it doesn't create heat, but moves it. The complexity of it can be broken down like this. The earth's temperature hovers in the 50-plus degree range in the Midwest, evidenced by cave temperatures. When a geothermal unit is put into operation, it takes that heat – which is warmer than surface air – and by compressor, removes the heat from water running through tubing or loops installed in the ground. It then provides 105-degree air into the house. In the summer, a reverse valve creates the opposite effect, cooling the home or business.

In short, it takes less energy to cool or heat a facility because the energy has been obtained from its original source – the earth.

Mike Henry, Comptroller for the

Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, was faced with choosing a new heating system. He and his wife built a new home in 2009, just recently moving in.

As a 20-year employee of the association, Henry said he's been well exposed to geothermal articles such as Rye's and lots of talk about the efficiency of the system.

"As first-time home builders, we had a lot of decisions to make. Being familiar with geothermal made the heating and cooling decision an easy one," Henry says.

Since it was a new home, Henry went a step further, putting in

Top of Page: Crews from Durbin Enterprises bore holes for the loop field at Mike Henry's new home in Springfield. Henry is the Comptroller at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in Springfield and believes strongly in the benefits of geothermal heating and cooling.



The work was well under way for the installation of the geothermal units at Mike Henry's new home in Springfield.

geothermal-powered radiant floor heat in the basement and bathrooms. The rest of the home gets hot or cold air, depending upon the season, through ducts.

The savings for Henry's family are only calculated at this point, but his installer, Dave Weidner of Weidner Refrigeration, Inc., Divernon, says the choices Henry made will serve him well.

"Geothermal is considered renewable energy," says Weidner, adding, "it's clean; it's efficient" and qualifies as green technology.

One of the units Weidner installed for Henry is a ClimateMaster, 4-ton, Tranquility model.

"He's got the Cadillac of the Cadillacs," Weidner says.

Weidner, who is often praised for quality work, is a huge proponent of geothermal and installs several different units from different companies. In addition to ClimateMaster, he is also a dealer of GeoComfort, a quality line from EnerTech Manufacturing, a company that Weidner proclaims to be a top-notch supplier.

His recommendation on what unit to install for a customer comes from a heat load analysis completed by Weidner at the beginning of a project. In that he measures the size of the home, looks at the existing system or what is being built, checks out the insulation and the windows and checks the cost of energy from the utility.

From his data, he can give qualified estimates as to how much the customer will save by going geothermal and how long payback will take.

While rebates and efficiency make geothermal enticing, there are times when Weidner won't recommend it. The amount of time a person intends to stay in a home is a consideration; another drawback can be limited lot space. If the lot size isn't large enough to install the geothermal loop field, then other options have to be considered.

All the conditions were right for the Henry home. Since it was new construction, D & S Builders – owned and operated by Todd Dudley and Dan Schrage, who are rated as Energy Star builders – made sure the home met the geothermal installation requirements.

Dudley said Henry's home is both

Gold Star green rated and a qualified Energy Star home. He and his partner are certified in both areas and apply similar quality specs in all their contracted jobs.

He said the job of the primary contractor is to keep the air out. Energy efficiency specifics in the Henry home include varying amounts and types of insulation. Sub-contractor A.H.I. of Springfield installed a wet-spray cellulose insulation in the 2 x 6 walls with a rating of R-21. Dudley says it gets in all the crevices to block out the elements. Around 11 inches of cellulose, with an R-38 rating was blown into the attic and even an R-28 in the garage.

Attention to windows is also a detail that can't be overlooked. Dudley said he likes to install an Energy Star, low-e with a good wind rating. He said Henry's home endured some high winds in recent weeks and "it held up really well."

When the job is complete, D & S performs a blower door test. Henry's home well-exceeded the specifications, earning a superb rating.

If geothermal is the choice heat source, as it was for the Henry home, Weidner is adamant about proper installation. He's been called to the rescue several times to uncover problems left behind by inexperienced geothermal installers. Not only does it give geothermal a bad name, it can also cost the customer thousands of dollars to correct.

"That's happening all over the state," Weidner says. He suggests

How to pick a geothermal installer

- 1. Get a lot of good referrals. Ask friends who like their geothermal units for their installer's numbers. Ask the bidder to provide references.**
- 2. Call your local cooperative. They will know of quality installers in your area.**
- 3. Don't necessarily take your builder's choice for a geothermal installer. Do your own homework.**
- 4. Get an installer who will provide good service after the initial installation.**

customers do their homework before accepting a bid from an installer.

Dudley had nothing but praise for Weidner.

"He does a super job," Dudley said, noting that Weidner is an expert on determining airflow through the home.

The type of unit is important, too, with product lines getting stronger and stronger.

Chris Smith, GeoComfort sales representative from Enertech, says the company has taken a giant step forward this year, developing a new unit called the Compass Series. Enertech is touting it as the first major innovation in the geothermal heat pump industry in more than 20 years.

It came about in a type of round-table atmosphere, where 12 reputable geothermal dealers from the state were asked to participate on a panel to "decide how to build the best product we can build," Smith said.

After much discussion, the Enertech research and development team in Greenville, where the company is headquartered, worked with the ideas, ran the tests and developed the new unit which was unveiled Nov. 3 at a distributor meeting. Full production is set to begin in January.

What's different about it? It's the first multi-positional geothermal unit on the market. In short, that means dealers can decrease inventory on the floor. In addition, it's said to be extremely quiet, designed with a control panel that's more at eye level and it looks good.

The thing that didn't change is the quality interior components. It's basically the same unit, but the company is just "taking things to a new level."

"It's neat. It's clean," Smith said.

Enertech had an "awesome growth year" in 2009, according to the salesman. With the Compass ramping up, it is expecting continued success.

"We're getting rave reviews," he said.

Incremental Payback

Which is the smarter buy?

In 2010 you have many options for heating, some appearing more costly than others. But consumers need to consider government tax credits in the equation of costs and savings.

As an example, let's say the homeowner looks at geothermal, which could cost in the neighborhood of \$30,000. Then the owner looks at the savings he can expect on his monthly bill, adding up how long it would take him to recoup that initial investment. Some people might refer to this as payback.

But that's wrong. The homeowner has already made an error in judgment. The typical formula is called "incremental payback." It's a more accurate measure says John Freitag, Vice President of Operations for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives.

It works like this. Let's say the geothermal unit and installation is \$30,000. For comparison purposes, a traditional gas-forced air unit in our example will cost \$15,000. The incremental payback would be based on the \$15,000 difference.

But wait. Government incentives are going to reduce that difference. A tax credit allowance of 30 percent available through 2016 can be applied to the geothermal unit. The conventional furnace also qualifies for a 30 percent tax credit up to \$1,500 through 2010.

Now the cost factors look considerably closer. The geothermal unit in



The Compass Series is the newest model being produced and marketed by GeoComfort. It is the first multi-positional geothermal unit on the market, designed with assistance from a panel of dealers to be more service friendly and aesthetically pleasing.

this example will cost \$21,000. The traditional unit will cost \$13,500, a difference of only \$7,500 – half of the original cost differential.

At this point, incremental payback, the time it takes to recoup the difference through the energy savings, is much smaller. A typical incremental payback for a residential geothermal installation is 3-6 years, Freitag says.

In addition to the government incentives, heating systems like geothermal are often eligible for additional rebates from entities such as power suppliers. For information regarding rebates, check out the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity at <http://www.commerce.state.il.us/dsireusa.org/incentives>.

For information on geothermal visit the Geothermal Alliance of Illinois at www.gaioi.org

How efficient is geothermal?

Try this equation. According to Chris Smith of Enertech, the 4-ton typical unit is 470 percent efficient. In other words, the consumer buys \$1 worth of electricity and gets \$4.70 cents worth of heat.

Spoon River Steps Up

Cooperative leap 'just makes sense'

Electric cooperatives are generally great resources for learning about heat units and quality installers, but one Illinois cooperative has taken service to a new level – a level believed to be unmatched by any other cooperative in the country.

As of April 2008, Spoon River Electric Cooperative, located in Canton, Ill., bought out an established business known to area customers as Easley Mechanical Services. It was renamed Spoon River Mechanical Services, Inc.

Bill Dodds, President and CEO of Spoon River, said the reputable business founded by Kermit Easley in the 1970s, had been supplying quality service to members for years. Easley passed away in the fall of 2007, but it was his commitment to the rural community and his long-time belief in geothermal that spawned Dodds' new vision.

"I'm thinking this just makes sense," Dodds says, remembering why he supported the unconventional idea.

Not only were the employees of Easley retained, others were hired. There are now 15 full-time employees.

The new division is a separate, for-profit business. Brenda Rothert, Director of Communications and Member Services for Spoon River Electric Cooperative, works extensively with the division.

"Spoon River Mechanical adds value for our members, but we serve customers throughout the area," Rothert says. Building on the foundation created by Easley, the new venture has seen nothing but success and growth.

Spoon River Mechanical is a full-line business with a 1,200 square-foot showroom located about a block from the cooperative headquarters, offering sales, service and installation on everything from electrical, heating, cooling, refrigeration, plumbing and more.

"If you're building a new house,



Bill Dodds, President and CEO of Spoon River Electric Cooperative, gives Don Wood, Vice President of Government Relations for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, a tour of the new showroom for Spoon River Mechanical Services. The facility is located about a block from the rural electric headquarters in Canton, Ill. and has a number of its products on display.

we can do all the mechanical system work, not just the heating and plumbing," says Rothert. The company offers sales and installation of Generac whole-house backup generators. It also installs and services WaterFurnace geothermal systems, as well as Trane heating and cooling equipment for the more conventional installation or replacement.

One of the principles cooperatives exist to support is that of "Concern for Community." The Mechanical division, which serves both rural electric members and other non-member customers, has helped maintain quality service in its territory.

"It's really great to have a place where we can refer our members," says Rothert, noting that it offers fair rates and good service.

Rod Lynch, Vice President of Operations for Spoon River Mechanical, spoke to the growing number of geothermal installations. Efficiency and government incentives have greatly increased the number of people choosing the energy source that comes from the ground. He said at one time 30-

40-percent of customers were choosing geothermal. That ratio has increased. Now requests are two to one.

Another boost to those numbers is the available financing. A local bank has made it easier for many members to secure the money for the geothermal installations. Dodds says it's a straightforward program with a fixed rate.

Lynch says the division also works with the government's weatherization program to assist those in need. And as the company matures, the three expect loans and grants to become a part of the financial resources.

Rothert says Dodds was the impetus for this major venture. Again, he says the situation was just perfect to make it succeed.

"Everything just fell into place," Dodds says.

In addition to the Mechanical division, the cooperative also owns Spoon River Propane, a winning combination according to Rothert.

"In conjunction with the propane business, it makes us an all-energy provider."

Teach Your Children

Parents, caregivers urged to help protect the smallest among us

If you have small children or occasionally care for them, I urge you to learn about electrical safety and to use that information to teach the youngsters about electrical safety.

At this time of year children are often restless and bored from being cooped up inside during the winter. This might inspire them to be just as curious and adventurous indoors as they are outside. You can help prevent that curiosity from creating a deadly tragedy.

Statistics provided by the National Electric Manufacturers Association (NEMA), support the need for making safety a priority.

In the U.S., an average of seven children per day, mostly boys under age three, are treated in emergency rooms for injuries due to contact with electrical outlets. Typically, these injuries occur at home and are caused by inserting common objects such as hairpins, keys and paper clips. Most victims experience 1st-degree or 2nd-degree burns – but more serious injuries also occur.

Often these injuries are reportedly happening even when adult supervision is present.

Luckily there are some really affordable and convenient ways to make your home less hazardous.

Safe Electricity, a safety awareness program of the Energy Education Council, recommends investing in the following measures to protect your loved ones:

- **Tamper Resistant Outlet Receptacles** – These receptacles have built-in shutter systems that prevent single-pronged objects like hairpins and paper clips from being inserted. Unlike plastic outlet caps, the new receptacles are permanent, automatic and reliable. They install just like standard outlets and are marginally more expensive. NEMA estimates that it costs only \$50 more per average home to install the tamper-resistant receptacles.

- **Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)** – These devices are used in interior outlets of the home in rooms with high water use such as the kitchen, bathroom, laundry and basement. GFCIs should also be installed on exterior outlets as well. GFCIs stop the flow of



electricity instantly if there is a problem.

- **Professional Electrical Inspections** – Hiring an electrical professional ensures home safety by making certain home electrical systems and wiring is adequate to support increased electric demands of a growing and active family. An older home may be inadequately wired for today's electrical consumption, putting your family at risk for fire and electrical shock.
- **Make sure everyone in the family knows to stay away from downed power lines and wires and tell children to report any fallen or dangling wires to an adult. Always assume that any power line is fully charged and stay far away.**

It's a good idea to include utility emergency numbers with other posted emergency phone numbers, and instruct children how to call for help in an emergency.

For more information on electrical safety visit www.SafeElectricity.org. ■

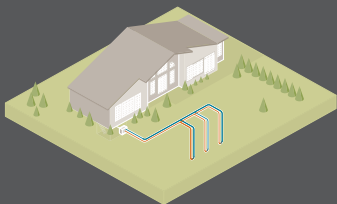
“An average of seven children per day, mostly boys under age three, are treated in emergency rooms for injuries due to contact with electrical outlets.”

Michael L. Ashenfelter is the Sangamon County Electrical/ Mechanical Inspector and a member of the Safe Electricity Advisory Team (www.safeelectricity.org), 217-747-5111, MikeA@co.sangamon.il.us.



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Flower Power Solves Winter Doldrums

How to keep that loving feeling and cut flowers fresh

In the middle of the month, wives will hint that Valentine's Day is just around the corner, and "wouldn't some roses be nice?" If they're lucky, they'll get a dozen or more. If their unlucky, they may get a vacuum cleaner, though I've been told that some appreciate the vacuum more than the roses.

Fresh flowers are a thing to be enjoyed during the doldrums of February. With little green outside to mask the browns and grays of the season, colorful blooms can provide a boost to the soul, if not a route to something more enjoyable like a freshly baked pie.

Giving flowers is easy enough. Find a store that sells them, preferably staying away from gas stations, which is not to say they aren't the best place to buy flowers, but would you really think a florist was the best location to buy gas?

So, you hand the flowers to the intended and say, "Happy Valentine's Day. I hope you love them. Is that a freshly baked pie I smell?"

Your part is done as the giver if you want to appear as nothing but a pie-hungry buffoon.

Like most things, if you can make the enjoyment last, the benefits also increase. The same applies to flowers.

It doesn't take much to make flowers last, as long as you remember they love water and cool

temperatures, and hate bacteria. All the fresh water and 60-degree temperature don't mean a thing once the bacteria start swinging.

Bacteria-ridden water turns cloudy quickly and causes interesting aromas to permeate the air that smell more like rotten cooked cabbage. No one mistakes it for a freshly baked pie.

Once you start seeing the water cloud, it may not be too late, but more times than not it really is the beginning of the end. You can change the water, but you also need to clean the vase thoroughly at this stage with bleach to disinfect it. You also need to worry that the bacteria have attached to the stems and will multiply once you supply them with fresh water.

On top of that, the bacteria clog up the cut end. No matter how much fresh water you supply, the blooms might not be able to absorb any without the stems being recut.

The vast majority of bacteria are harbored on flower stems and leaves. That's why the first tenant of flower longevity is to strip all the leaves that would be under water. You can't do much about the stems since they're an integral part of the flower.

Also start with a clean vase. While it takes a little more work, fill the vase with warm water and add a half-cup of bleach and let it sit for 30 minutes. Most bacteria should be killed. Fill the vase twice with clean water and empty to get rid of the bleach residue.

Many bouquets come with flower preservatives that keep the bacteria in check as well as nourishing the flowers. Some folks say they achieve the same effect using clear sodas such as Sprite, 7-Up or Sierra Mist.

Flowers also need a fresh cut before placing them in the water. Take a pair of pruners or a sharp knife and cut off a half-inch of the stems. Some like to do this underwater, which makes more sense, as the cut end isn't exposed to air. However, you end up with stems floating in the vase or sinking to the bottom.

In most cases, if you just cut quickly and stick the flowers in the vase, you shouldn't have a problem.

Just because you do all this doesn't mean the flowers will last longer. You have to go the route of changing the water completely every three days and adding more preservatives.

Keep temperatures on the cool side. Flowers last longer at 60 degrees than they do at 70 degrees. 50 degrees is better, but usually not practical.

Realize that no matter what you do, the flowers ultimately will die. That's a fact of life and a part of the charm. Just think of the advantages if you brought another bouquet in once a month - all those freshly baked pies. ■

"Flowers last, as long as you remember they love water and cool temperatures and hate bacteria."

David Robson is an Extension Educator, Horticulture, at the Springfield Extension Center, University of Illinois Extension, P.O. Box 8199, Springfield, IL 62791. Telephone: 217-782-6515. E-mail: drobson@uiuc.edu.



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Before we start on this month's topic let me say that last month's column on Marathon water heaters generated a lot of calls. I told you to contact your local electric co-op. But if your co-op doesn't have Marathon water heaters for sale, contact a local contractor who carries Rheem water heaters. Or go to www.marathonheaters.com, call 800-478-9434, or go to www.rheem.com and type in your zip code to find a contractor near you. In addition to carrying the Marathon line, Rheem also has a new heat pump water heater.

I wish I had the power to command no more ice storms. But, of course, I don't. I am aware that many of our readers have been affected by the ice storms. In fact, the "Ice Storm of 2009" was the worst that I have ever seen. When this happened, it just made me really aware of how much we depend on this wonderful product we call electricity.

Let me take this opportunity to say to every single person who worked so many hours to restore electric distribution systems that originally took many years to build — thank you, thank you, thank you.

This winter has been very cold, but fortunately the ice storms have not been as bad. As I write this column, I have just completed appearing at a home show in Kentucky. I am preparing to conduct an energy efficiency seminar at a community college in Tennessee tonight. I will then drive to south Arkansas for a seminar and

then to Illinois for a seminar and radio show. I have had great difficulty in deciding how to write this article because there is so much that I wish to teach you. However, I am allowed only one page.

I went down this morning for breakfast in the motel lobby and asked if I could have a late check-out since my seminar was not until 5 p.m. at the college. The lady at the desk asked, "Are you the caulk man?" To which I answered, "Yes, I am the King of Caulk and Talk. How did you know?"



She said, "I received a brochure in the mail about the meeting from our power company and I plan to be there because my electric bills have really gone up this year."

I told her that she has two choices: Do something about it or just keep complaining. I proceeded to give her a personal one-hour seminar and answer her questions. Before we had finished, several others in the area had joined the group.

Folks, every indication is that utility rates will continue to increase no matter where you live. And with a slow economy, utility bills will become a larger percentage of a family's budget. You have two choices: Use less or use less. Some of you are thinking, "This man is a genius." Others are thinking, "This man is a moron." Probably, both of you are correct. I have spent my entire adult life teaching others how to use less by conservation and energy efficiency. Example: Turning off the light is conservation, but installing a compact fluorescent bulb is energy efficiency.

Now for the other great news: I am happy to announce that it is now more feasible to make energy improvements than ever before.

The Stimulus Bill signed by the president on Feb. 17, 2009, allows for impressive tax credits to help pay for energy improvements. Please understand I am not your tax advisor, but I suggest that you go to www.energystar.gov for details. Please note that these are tax credits, which may be worth far more than tax deductions. Please note that there are tax credits for windows, insulation, solar systems, wind systems, and the best news of all, geothermal heat pumps. You can now install the best heating and cooling system available and may qualify for a tax credit of 30 percent of the total cost on your tax return. My friends, this is huge. ■

Doug Rye, the "Doctor of Energy Efficiency—the King of Caulk and Talk" can be heard on several different Illinois radio stations. Or you can go to his Web site at www.dougyrie.com, e-mail him at info@philliprye.com, or call 501-653-7931. You can also sign up for a free newsletter and order his "how to" videotapes.



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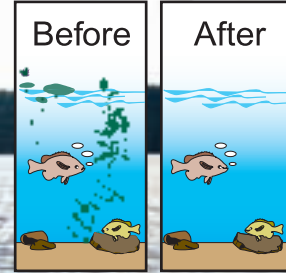
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Electric cooperatives, the electric utility industry and consumers — all of us — are facing a significant challenge in the next decade. Rising demand for power has virtually exhausted the surplus electric generation built in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In fact, the U.S. Department of Energy forecasts that economic growth will drive a 26 percent increase in demand from 2007 to 2030. In addition, any solution must include consideration for the environment and new climate change policy goals.

To get where we need to be, we'll have to be creative and draw on many resources. Renewable energy has to be developed and added to the grid, now. Increased efficiency must be achieved on both sides of the meter and new low-emissions power plants have to be built and brought on-line.

Each of these options has tradeoffs and will cost money. So we've got to stay engaged, focused and ready to make smart choices. There's no silver bullet to solving our energy challenges. That's why we need to balance traditional and renewable fuels, as well as increase energy efficiency.

Until now, however, debate over our energy future has not included those who ultimately will be asked to pay for changes in energy policy. Consumer interests must be considered as Congress debates policy proposals. As consumer-owned organizations, electric co-ops are speaking out on behalf of electric consumers, and co-op members have a responsibility and an obligation to take part in the current debate.

That is why the "Our Energy, Our Future" program was developed. It's a national grassroots campaign that aims to start a dialogue between our elected officials and electricity consumers like you.

The www.ourenergy.coop site makes it easy for you to speak directly to elected officials.

The problem

How will we supply the power we need to grow the economy while at the same time curbing emissions of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, blamed for contributing to climate change?

Facts on capacity

The Energy Information Administration (EIA) projects electricity needs will grow nationally .9 percent a year from 2007 through 2030, for a 23 percent increase.

Meeting the increased demand will require a total of 252 gigawatts of new capacity, unless extraordinary efficiency measures are adopted.

Out of 15 regions covered in the North American Electric Reliability Commission's 2008 Long-Term Reliability Assessment (LTRA), seven are expected to dip below recommended capacity margins in the next five years.

According to the LTRA, nearly 25,000 MW of coal generation is still slated for construction in the next 10 years; however, the recent trend of cancellation and deferral of coal-fired plants casts doubt on many of these projects.

Will we have the technology we need to supply adequate power in a carbon-constrained world?

With technology now available, electric utilities have four options for

baseload power generation: coal, gas, nuclear and, in some regions, large-scale hydroelectric. Most renewable resources such as wind or solar provide intermittent power unsuitable for baseload power generation. Generation using alternative sources that are not intermittent, such as landfill gas, are at this point not on a scale to replace traditional fossil fuels; the largest extant landfill plant provides 8 MW.

Facts on the current state of technology

A study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology acknowledges that commercially viable carbon-capture and sequestration technology is years away; the most optimistic projection is 2020.

Investments in energy research and development (R&D) declined precipitously. While investment in research and development is roughly



Concerned about our energy future, cooperatives are already investing in many smart grid component technologies. For example, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) recently found that cooperatives lead the electricity industry in deployment of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), one of the technologies for the smart grid.

Straight Talk About

3 percent of gross domestic product, it has been roughly one-tenth that in the energy sector. By contrast, R&D investments in the medical and biotechnology field are roughly 15 percent of sales. As a nation we need to invest more in innovative energy solutions.

In the last five years, utility bills have risen 30 percent. Across the nation and especially in the Midwest, consumers will be paying more for electricity. The rising cost of fuel combined with the rising cost of building new generation mean that electric rates will increase even if we do nothing to address climate change.

Times are hard for many Americans. The downturn in the economy will increase the numbers of Americans who cannot afford to pay their electric bills. The great achievement of Franklin Roosevelt's rural electrification program – affordable electricity for all Americans – is at risk.

The energy proposals being debated in Congress all entail further increasing the cost of what has become a necessity in American life: reliable electricity.

Facts on cost:

- The price of coal – the fuel for over half of America's power plants – has doubled since last year while the cost of liquid natural gas has soared by as much as 50 percent.
- The typical household in America spends about \$1,400 per year on electricity, or more than 2 percent of median annual income and for lower income households it represents over 8 percent of income.

- Under the proposed carbon cap and trade scheme, which would auction carbon emission allowances on the market, the average Illinois electric co-op member using 1,000 kWh a month will see a \$10.81 increase a month if the cost of CO₂ is \$10 a metric ton and \$108.09 if the market reaches a \$100 price per ton.

The EPA has already started the process of regulating CO₂

Spurred by the U.S. Supreme Court 2007 decision that EPA has the authority under the Clean Air Act to regulate CO₂, the agency has begun to take action. In April, EPA proposed an "endangerment finding" that, when finalized, will open the door to EPA regulations. Unfortunately, the Clean Air Act is not well suited to addressing global climate change. It was developed primarily to address local and regional air quality issues, not global scale issues. Further, the framework established by the act would create a confusing and complicated regulatory system that would lead to what Rep. John Dingell called "a glorious mess."

Proposals will impact electric cooperatives

Well-crafted legislation is a better solution than EPA regulation. While Congress must decide numer-

ous details in developing legislation to reduce CO₂ emissions, several key issues deserve particular attention:

- Stringency and timing of caps – this has the biggest impact on the program's cost and will determine the public's willingness to sustain the policy over time.
- Allocating carbon emission allowances to keep the program affordable, or auctioning them to the highest bidder to raise revenue.
- Whether to allow Wall Street speculators to drive up emission allowance prices, thereby setting electricity prices for all electricity consumers.
- Inclusion of an "economic safety valve" to protect against energy price spikes and allow for prudent planning and robust economic growth.
- Scope of the program (covering the entire economy or only specific sectors).
- Whether to allow use of agricultural and other "offsets."
- How to promote advanced technology research, development and deployment.
- How to address other countries' emissions that make up more than 75 percent of worldwide emissions.

In 1932, President Franklin Roosevelt declared that electricity was a necessity, not a luxury. He committed to making it available and affordable to all Americans. We must not turn back on that commitment from over 70 years ago.

Our Energy Future

Penne With Tomatoes, Olives and Two Cheeses (right)

- 6 T. olive oil
- 1-1/2 C. chopped onion
- 3 (28-oz.) cans Italian plum tomatoes
- 2 tsp. dried basil
- 1-1/2 tsp. dried crushed red pepper
- 2 C. low-sodium canned chicken broth
- 1 lb. penne or rigatoni pasta
- 2-1/2 C. grated Havarti cheese
- 1/3 C. sliced kalamata olives
- 1/3 C. grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 C. finely chopped fresh basil

Heat 3 T. olive oil in a heavy large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add onion and garlic; sauté until onion is translucent, about 5 minutes. Mix in tomatoes, basil and red pepper. Bring to a boil, breaking up the tomatoes with the back of a spoon. Add broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer and simmer until mixture thickens to a chunky sauce and reduces to 6 cups. Stir occasionally, about 1 hour and 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Preheat oven to 375°. Cook pasta in a large pot of boiling water until tender. Drain well. Return pasta to the pot. Toss pasta with 3 T. olive oil. Pour sauce over and toss to blend well. Mix in Havarti cheese. Transfer to a 9x13-inch glass baking dish. Sprinkle with olives and Parmesan. Bake until heated through, about 30 minutes. Sprinkle with basil before serving.

Three-Step Brownie Bottom Pudding Pie

- 4 (1-oz.) squares semi-sweet baking chocolate
- 1/4 C. margarine
- 3/4 C. sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 C. flour
- 1/2 C. chopped nuts, opt.
- 2-1/2 C. cold milk
- 2 (4-serving) pkgs. instant chocolate pudding
- Whipped topping for garnish

Microwave chocolate and butter on high for 2 minutes; stir until chocolate is melted and smooth. Stir in sugar, eggs and vanilla. Blend in flour, then nuts. Spread batter in a greased 9-inch pie plate. Bake at 350° (325° for glass pie plate) for 25 minutes or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the center comes out with fudgy crumbs. Do not over bake. Cool. Pour milk into a large bowl. Add pudding mixes. Beat with a wire whisk for 1 minute. Let stand 2 minutes. Spread over brownie pie. Top with whipped topping. Refrigerate.

Feta Chicken With Oregano

- 1 (8-oz.) ctn. plain yogurt
- 2 lg. garlic cloves, minced
- 1 T. chopped, fresh oregano, or 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground pepper
- 4 skinned and deboned chicken breasts
- 3/4 C. crumbled feta cheese

Combine yogurt, garlic, oregano and pepper in a large bowl. Add chicken; turn to coat. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for 30 minutes, turning after 15 minutes. Preheat broiler. Remove chicken from marinade, reserving marinade. Place chicken on a lightly greased rack in a broiler pan. Brush with remaining marinade. Broil 5-1/2 inches away from heat for 8-10 minutes. Turn chicken over; sprinkle evenly with feta cheese. Broil 4-5 minutes more or until chicken is done and golden. Serve immediately.

Apricot Bread

- 1 C. snipped, dried apricots
- 2 C. warm water
- 1 C. sugar
- 2 T. butter, softened
- 1 egg
- 3/4 C. orange juice
- 2 C. all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/4 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. salt
- 3/4 C. nuts

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease a 9x5-inch loaf pan. Soak apricots in warm water for 30 minutes. Cream sugar, butter and egg in a mixing bowl. Stir in orange juice. Combine flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Stir into creamed mixture just until combined. Drain apricots well. Add to batter with nuts. Pour into a loaf pan. Bake at 350° for 55 minutes. Cool for 10 minutes, then remove to a wire rack.

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Penne With Tomatoes, Olives and Two Cheeses

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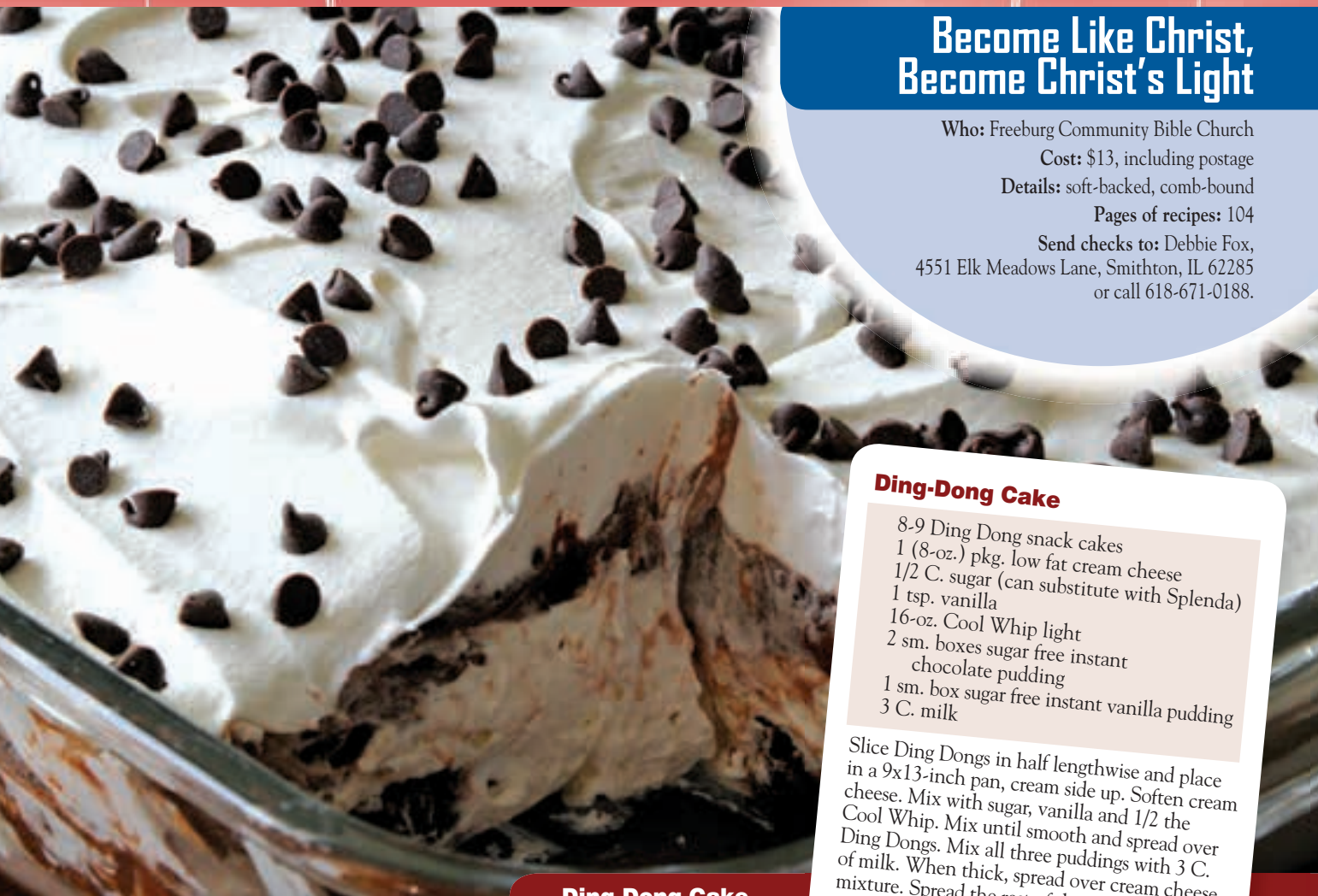
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Send checks to: Debbie Fox,
4551 Elk Meadows Lane, Smithton, IL 62285
or call 618-671-0188.



Ding-Dong Cake

8-9 Ding Dong snack cakes
1 (8-oz.) pkg. low fat cream cheese
1/2 C. sugar (can substitute with Splenda)
1 tsp. vanilla
16-oz. Cool Whip light
2 sm. boxes sugar free instant
chocolate pudding
1 sm. box sugar free instant vanilla pudding
3 C. milk

Slice Ding Dongs in half lengthwise and place in a 9x13-inch pan, cream side up. Soften cream cheese. Mix with sugar, vanilla and 1/2 the Cool Whip. Mix until smooth and spread over Ding Dongs. Mix all three puddings with 3 C. of milk. When thick, spread over cream cheese mixture. Spread the rest of the Cool Whip on top. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Ding-Dong Cake

Apple Apricot Stuffed Pork Chops

1/2 C. chopped onion
1/2 C. chopped celery
1 T. butter, melted
1/2 C. bread crumbs
1/2 C. peeled, chopped cooking apples
1/3 C. raisins
1 T. brown sugar
1/2 tsp. ground ginger
1/4 C. apricot preserves, divided
6 (1-inch thick) pork loin chops,
trimmed and cut with pockets

Sauté onion and celery in butter in a skillet until crisp. Combine onion mixture, breadcrumbs, apples, raisins, brown sugar and ginger. Stir in 2 T. preserves. Stuff breadcrumb mixture into pockets of chops. Place in an ungreased 9x13-inch baking dish. Cover and bake at 325° for 45 minutes. Uncover and brush with remaining 2 T. of preserves. Bake an additional 15 minutes until pork chops are tender.

Hash Brown Casserole

30-oz frozen hash browns, country style
1 (16-oz.) and 1 (12-oz.) pkg. American cheese slices, torn into pieces
1 (16-oz.) sour cream
2 cans cream of mushroom soup
2-1/2 C. milk
3 C. cornflakes, crushed
3 T. margarine, melted
Salt and pepper, to taste

In a large bowl, mix cheese and hash browns. In a smaller bowl, mix sour cream, soup and milk; blend well. Add to hash brown mixture. Mix well. Pour into a large, greased baking dish. In a small bowl, add melted margarine to crushed cornflakes and mix well. Pour over hash brown mixture. Bake at 350° for 1 hour to 1 hour and 10 minutes.

Photos by Catrina McCulley Wagner

Cranberry Chicken

4 chicken breasts, boneless
1 envelope dry onion soup mix
1 (16-oz.) can whole cranberry sauce
1 C. spicy-sweet French dressing

Place chicken breasts in a single layer in a lightly greased 13x9-inch baking dish. Sprinkle soup mix evenly over chicken. Stir cranberry sauce and spoon over chicken. Top evenly with dressing. Cover with foil and bake at 400° for 40 minutes. Remove foil and reduce temperature to 350°. Bake 20 minutes more.

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<p>Bloomington 2010 Home Show Interstate Center Bloomington, IL March 12, 13, 14</p>	<p>St. Charles Home Show St. Charles Convention Center St. Charles, MO April 23, 24, 25</p>

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- 4) Mail to: Illinois Marketplace, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708, by deadline.

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Driving on the Cutting Edge

For the past year, the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives and Prairie Power Inc have been part of a national collaboration testing plug-in hybrid technology. In October 2008 we installed a 5.5 kilowatt-hour battery in the AIEC's 2007 Toyota Prius. Since then, the car has been part of a national study coordinated by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Cooperative Research Network (CRN).

The Prius now has two hybrid batteries, in addition to the normal 12-volt battery that starts the car. The stock hybrid battery that came with the car is a nickel cadmium battery that is recharged through the car's regenerative charging system. The second, or add-on battery, is much larger and can be recharged only by plugging in the vehicle to a 120-volt outlet.

So after a year of operation, what's been learned with this plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV)?

John Freitag, AIEC Vice President of Operations, who has coordinated the project, says the vehicle is fully capable of achieving 100-plus miles per gallon if and when it's used in a typical commuter application.

"If you drive it the right way, it's almost downright hard to put gasoline in the car," he noted. "It's almost kind of embarrassing and foolish to fuel up the car at the gas station and only be able to put in \$3.50 worth of fuel after a couple weeks of operation," he said.

Freitag drove the vehicle exclusively during October of 2008, in its first month as a PHEV. He achieved well over 100-mpg during that time, logging about 800 miles – much of it at relatively low speeds in town.

"This is what the vehicle is designed for," he said. "I learned that it can be done. These vehicles can achieve outstanding fuel mileage, but three things are necessary for that to occur. First, the car must be plugged in consistently. The vehicle will operate for about 40 miles in electric mode,



John Freitag, AIEC Vice President of Operations, talks to Monroe County Electric Cooperative members John Rule and Patty Tinoco about the pros and cons of the Toyota plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) the Illinois electric cooperatives have tested as part of national research study. With an extra battery pack the car is capable of achieving 100-plus miles per gallon, but only when it's used in a typical in-town commuter application.

but when the battery gets depleted, it'll operate as a normal Toyota Prius and the fuel mileage will be that of a normal Prius. So the car must be plugged in. Second, the driver must operate the car reasonably. Flooring the accelerator in any vehicle will result in poor fuel mileage and this is especially true in the Prius PHEV. Lastly, for optimal fuel mileage, the car should be used in a typical "commuter" application. The PHEV is ideally suited for typical city driving – stop and go, speeds under 40 miles an hour, etc. The add-on plug-in battery improves highway mileage, but to a much lower extent than in town."

Freitag said the cooperatives have also learned that PHEV mileage suffers greatly when the weather turns cold.

"In addition to our experience with the Prius PHEV, my personal vehicle is a regular hybrid car, so I've done a fair amount of driving with hybrid vehicles," Freitag noted.

He said hybrids are best suited for the spring and fall months when the weather is moderate. In the winter during periods of extreme cold the batteries need to be warmed by the car's engine. So the gas engine runs more and fuel mileage decreases.

"In my own personal car, the gas engine runs right away when I hit the



Jefferson, Ga.-based Jackson Electric Membership Corporation put 103,000 miles on a converted hybrid vehicle as part of a two-year study being conducted by the Cooperative Research Network. The U.S. Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory and seven electric co-ops across the country have joined the research project.

power button at home in the morning. About the time I get to the office, the car is good and warm and the hybrid system is just about ready to really start performing — and I have arrived and turn the car off — only to cool off during the colder outside temperatures. When I'm ready to go home, the same process starts all over again."

Even the Prius PHEV, with its two-hybrid battery system, suffers during the cold weather. Freitag noted that mileage with the car was "downright miserable" last January during the extremely cold weather.

Hybrids and plug-in hybrids are just not designed for temperature extremes. In the summer, the vehicles operate nicely during very warm weather — however, when the car's air conditioning is turned on, the electric demand on the vehicle is greatly increased — leading to the

car engine starting very quickly and running much more. Then the fuel mileage also suffers.

The co-ops have also learned that recharging the plug-in battery is a snap — and that it's extremely economical. If the Prius PHEV's plug-in battery is completely discharged (and it usually isn't) the recharge should take about five hours. A full recharge would typically take about 50 cents' worth of electricity or less. Assuming a full recharge once per day, the plug-in electric operation would cost the typical consumer less than \$15 per month.

So, is it worth it in the long run?

Freitag said the technology is difficult to cost-justify right now. "It

would take a very, very long time to pay back our investment through fuel savings," he said. But as the price of hybrid vehicles continues to come down and gasoline prices go up, these cars can pay for themselves."

And it might not be too much longer before PHEVs are commonplace on the highways instead of being a

once-in-awhile curiosity. All the major automakers are working on battery technology and they're coming out with hybrids

and new plug-in hybrid cars. When people can buy a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle right off the dealer's lot, the prices are sure to be a lot more affordable — and we'll see many more of these cars zooming up and down the road — quietly.

"As the price of hybrid vehicles continues to come down and gasoline prices go up, these cars can pay for themselves."

4, Night of Jazz at Galena Middle School in Galena. Galena High and Middle School's Jazz Bands join forces for this annual jazz concert. 815-777-0917.

5-6 and 12-13, Almost, Maine at Starry Night Repertory Theatre in Taylors Hall in Macomb. 7:30 p.m. On a cold, clear, moonless night in the middle of winter, the residents of Almost find themselves falling in and out of love in unexpected and often hilarious ways. Knees are bruised. Hearts are broken, but the bruises heal, and the hearts mend — almost — in this delightful midwinter night's dream. Admission: \$15. 309-255-8570.

5-6, Manhattan Irish Fest in Downtown Manhattan. A "kick off" to your St. Patrick's Day Celebration. Thousands over the years have enjoyed the parade, entertainment tent and family fun tent. The heated entertainment tent hosts a wide variety of Irish performers. 815-931-0410 or www.manhattanirishfest.com.

5-7, Illinois Horse Fair in the Upstairs Ring Livestock Center at the Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield. Fri.: 3 – 9 p.m. Sat.: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. Sun.: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. 217-585-1600.



5-14, Effingham Art Guild's Children's Art Show at the Rosebud Theatre in Effingham. 217-925-5161 or suzis_graphics@juno.com.

6, The 12th Annual Galena Area Business Showcase at the Galena Convention Center in Galena. Local merchants and business people display products and information. Food, door prizes and drawings. 815-777-9050 or www.galenachamber.com.



6-7, The 12th Annual Illinois Products Expo in the Orr Building at the Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield. Admission: Adults – \$4; Children (10 and under) – free. Sat.: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Sun.: 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. 217-524-3012.

6-7, The 2010 Spring Home Improvement Show at the County Fairgrounds in Kankakee. Browse local and regional vendors for siding, windows, heating, remodeling and more, come see what they can do to make your home better. Various vendors throughout the day will hold demonstrations and raffles. 815-482-4131, info@visitkankakeecounty.com or www.visitkankakeecounty.com.

6, McLean County Annual Home, Lawn and Garden Day at Central Catholic High School in Bloomington. Enjoy classes and a keynote address by Diane Noland, Illinois Gardener moderator. Vendors available to share products and information. Lunch, morning snack, door prizes and handouts included in the \$40 registration fee. 309-663-8306 or www.mclean-extension.org.



13, Cheeseburgers in Paradise at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Lincoln. 6 p.m. Proceeds go to senior programs in Logan and Mason counties. \$25 includes entertainment and all you can eat cheeseburger buffet. 217-732-2159.

13, Super Saturdays in A Place for Discovery: Curious Collections at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Do you like collecting dolls, cars, sports cards, or something else that is special to you? Many Museums were started to house the collections of people just like you. In conjunction with Junior Collector's Day, Super Saturday will focus on how to begin, grow, and protect a collection. Learn about collections with games, crafts, and activities. 217-782-6044.

19-20, Children's Overnight Camp-In at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield. 7 p.m. – 8 a.m. Mammoths and sloths and short-faced bears! Oh My! Learn about Illinois' giant ice age creatures, join in exciting experiments and activities, sleep under a tree in the museum, and more. A late night pizza snack and breakfast are included. Ages: 8–11. Fee: Museum Society members – \$28 per child or \$25 per child for two or more children from the same family. Nonmembers – \$38 per child or \$35 each for two or more children from the same family. 217-782-5993.



27, Miss Annie's Tea and Gossip Parlor at the Ryan Mansion in Galena. Victorian high tea, parlor games and the latest gossip. Victorian attire encouraged, but not required. Reservations a must. 815-777-0336 or www.ryanmansion-galena.com.

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19-20, Biennial Quilt Show of Springfield Area Quilters at the Orr Building of the Illinois State Fair Grounds in Springfield. Friday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Hundreds of quilts and quilted items will be displayed. Admission is \$5 at the door or \$4 in advance from guild members and local quilt shops. 217-652-4292, Springfieldquilts@yahoo.com or springfieldquilts.com.



26-28, Wine Lovers Weekend at Massbach Ridge Winery in Elizabeth. Fall in love with Massbachs' award-winning wines. Tour the winery while sampling locally-grown wines paired with chocolates and local cheeses. 815-291-6700 or www.massbachridge.com.

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Deadline: February 15 for May Events. **Mail to:** Illinois Datebook, PO Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708. **E-mail to:** cwagner@aiec.coop

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(217) 347-5223

Energy

RSP Heating & Cooling
(618) 942-2424

Fairbury

Popejoy Plumbing, Htg & Electric
(815) 692-4471

Flora

Electro Electric, Inc.
(618) 662-4520

Gifford

Duden and Silver
(217) 568-7954

Goodfield

Hinrichsen Heating & Air
(309) 965-2604

Hamilton

Peters Heating & Air, Inc.
(217) 847-2777

Harrisburg

D&C Heating & Air
(618) 997-6577

Lawrenceville

Tracy Electric, Inc.
(618) 943-2243

Lincoln

Albert Service Heating & A/C
(217) 735-9990

Litchfield

Snell Enterprises, Inc.
(217) 324-4560

Macomb

Arnold Brothers Heating & Cooling
(309) 833-2852

Marion

D&C Heating & Air
(618) 997-6577

Mount Vernon

Holloway Heating & Air, Inc.
(618) 242-5481

Oglesby

John's Service & Sales
(815) 883-3637

Pana

Jansen's Heating & Cooling
(217) 562-5201

Paxton

Houston Plumbing & Heating
(800) 379-2165

Peru

Service Pro's Heating & Cooling
(815) 223-0715

Petersburg

Collins Plumbing & Heating
(217) 632-3670

Pittsfield

Peters Heating & Air, Inc.
(217) 285-1600

Pontiac

Kupferschmid
(815) 844-4109

Quincy

Peters Heating & Air, Inc.
(217) 222-1368

Red Bud

DeRousse Heating & Air, Inc.
(618) 282-2224

Salem

Booher Tin Shop
(618) 548-1295

Springfield

Collins Plumbing & Heating
(217) 793-8031

Taylorville

Jansen's Heating & Cooling
(217) 824-4138

Thomasboro

Hoveln Heating & Cooling, Inc.
(217) 643-2125

Tilton

Blackie's Automatic Engineering
(217) 442-1440

Viriden

Snell Enterprises, Inc.
(217) 965-3911

Waterloo

DeRousse Heating & Air, Inc.
(618) 282-2224

Winchester

Little Heating & A/C, Inc.
(217) 742-3332

